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AUTHOR Byrd, Marquita L.; Williams, Hampton S.
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ABSTRACT

These two related papers provide information on teacher attitudes toward black dialect use in the classroom and the measurement of such attitudes. The first paper reports on data from 176 administrators, counselors, teachers, and student teachers, revealing significant relationships between a teacher's definition of black dialect, attitudes toward black dialect, and race of teacher. The second paper describes the steps taken to refine and improve a language attitude inventory (LAI) so that it could be used to describe and to make inferences about teachers' attitudes toward the use of black dialect in the classroom. The two versions of the LAI and a bibliography on teacher attitudes and dialects are provided. (RL)

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LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND BLACK DIALECT: AN ASSESSMENT

(1) Language Attitudes in the Classroom

(2) A Reliable Measure of Language Attitudes

by

Marquita L. Byrd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Arts and Humanities
University of Houston
Downtown College

Hampton S. Williams, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Administration
University of Southern Mississippi

Papers presented at Speech Communication Association Convention, Anaheim California, November 1981

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LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN THE CLASSROOM

Marquita L. Byrd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Arts and Humanities
University of Houston
Downtown College

Hampton William, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Administration
University of Southern Mississippi

Paper presented at Speech Communication Association
Convention, Anaheim, California, November, 1981

EDUCATORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USE OF BLACK DIALECT IN THE CLASSROOM

The purpose of this investigation was to discover what was the relationship among the demographic characteristics of teachers, their definition of black dialect, and attitude toward its usage in the classroom. Based on the body of research dealing with teachers' attitudes toward the use of dialect the following hypotheses were posited:

H_1: Of the differences among individual teachers, including race, sex, position, and years teaching experience, only race will make a significant difference in language attitude scores.

H_2: Language attitudes are significantly related to definitions of black dialect.

H_3: Language attitudes will differ according to the race of teacher and teachers' definitions of black dialect.

Subjects (N = 176) included administrators, counselors, teachers, and student teachers. These subjects came from intact classrooms, seminars and the public school system. Data were gathered in face-to-face settings and by mail.

A series of one-way analyses of variance, correlation and multiple regression were used to test the data. Based on the results each hypothesis was confirmed. Teachers' attitudes toward the use of black dialect in the classroom did not vary according to position, sex or number of years spent teaching. The only demographic variable which caused a significant difference in attitude scores was the race of teacher. Black teachers had a more positive attitude toward the use of black dialect than white teachers.

Results from a Pearson r revealed a statistically significant relationship between the definition of black dialect and attitudes toward black dialect. Lastly, a multiple regression analysis supported the hypothesis that there was a significant relationship between definition of black dialect, race of teacher

and attitude toward black dialect usage.[2] When all variables were entered into a stepwise regression analysis it appeared that definition and race were best suited for the prediction of attitudes towards the use of black dialect in the classroom.

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A RELIABLE MEASURE OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Marquita L. Byrd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Arts and Humanities
University of Houston
Downtown College

Hampton S. Williams, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Administration
University of Southern Mississippi

Paper presented at Speech Communication Association Convention, Anaheim California, November 1981

ABSTRACT

The intent of the authors was to refine an existing language attitude inventory (LAI) so that it could be used to describe and to make inferences about teachers' attitudes toward the use of black dialect in the classroom. The LAI (Blodgett & Cooper, 1973), in its original form, consisted of six definitions, ten questions eliciting attitudes toward black dialect, and two demographic items. The original authors used the LAI to produce only descriptive data on teachers' language attitudes. In the present study, issues surrounding the reliability of the LAI were addressed. In the pilot study, using the original form of the LAI, the data, when analyzed for internal consistency, resulted in an alpha coefficient that was unacceptably low (.26). In the revised form of the LAI, with modifications of the items and of the response-choice structure, the reliability of the instrument was increased to .7146. The LAI, in its revised form, appears to be a reliable and statistically defensible instrument which allows for the data to be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential methods.

Figure 1

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI LANGUAGE PROJECT
(Instrument developed by University of Alabama)[1]

A great deal of study in the past few years has been directed toward improving communication in the educational system. One of the areas in which there is current interest in that of language usage in the classroom. We need your professional opinion concerning what black dialect is, and what is means to you as an educator.

Before proceeding, please circle the number within each of the demographic variables listed below that pertains to you.

A. Position	B. Race	C. Sex	D. Years in Teaching
1. administrator	1. black	1. female	1. 0
2. counselor	2. white	2. male	2. 1-5
3. teacher	3. other		3. 6-10
4. student teacher			4. 11-15
			5. 16-20
			6. 21-25
			7. 26 and over

The following is a list of definitions of black dialect. Please check the ONE definition that, in your professional opinion, most clearly describes what black dialect is.

_____1. One of the non-standard forms of English spoken by minority groups. It is characterized by differences in grammar, word usage, and pronunciation.

_____2. An underdeveloped language, consisting of many grammatical errors, poor pronunciation, and deficient vocabulary.

_____3. A variety of English spoken by a minority group, suitable for use in the minority community, but unacceptable outside this communicy.

_____4. An undesirable form of English spoken by a disadvantaged minority, consisting of deviant grammatical forms, poor word usage, and substandard pronunciation.

_____5. A different, but equally acceptable, form of English.

_____6. An uneducated way of speaking that is difficult to understand, poorly developed, and incapable of expressing complicated ideas.

PLEASE GO TO THE NEXT PAGE

(2)

Please answer the following questions based on your classroom experience with black dialect. Only "yes" or "no" answers are needed. Please circle the one answer that, in general, most nearly describes your experience.

yes no 1. Do dialect speakers in your classroom have difficulty following spoken directions?

yes no 2. Do you have difficulty understanding the speech of children with black dialect?

yes no 3. Do you think that Board of Education should provide special speech and language help for dialect-speaking children?

yes no 4. Do dialect speakers, in general, seem as intelligent as non-dialect speakers?

yes no 5. Do you attempt to eliminate dialect from the speech of children in your class?

yes no 6. If so, have you been successful at all?

yes no 7. Do language subjects (such as spelling, composition, and reading) seem to be more difficult for dialect-speaking than for non-dialect-speaking children?

yes no 8. Do you think parents should eliminate black dialect from their speech?

yes no 9. Do you think dialect-speaking children can make satisfactory progress in school without changing their speech?

yes no 10. In general, does the dialect result in communication problems in your classroom?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Blodgett, E., & Cooper, E. Attitudes of elementary teachers toward black dialect. Journal of Communication Disorders, 1973, 6, 121-133.

Figure 2

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI LANGUAGE PROJECT
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Before proceeding, please circle the number within each of the demographic variables listed below that pertains to you.

A. Position	B. Race	C. Sex	D. Years in Teaching
1. administrator	1. black	1. female	1. 0
2. counselor	2. white	2. male	2. 1-5
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4. student teacher			4. 11-15
			5. 16-20
			6. 21-25
			7. 26 and over

The following is a list of definitions of black dialect. Please check the ONE definition that, in your professional opinion, most clearly describes what black dialect is:

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____2. An underdeveloped language, consisting of many grammatical errors, poor pronunciation, and deficient vocabulary.

____3. A variety of English spoken by a minority group, suitable for use in the minority community, but unacceptable outside this community.

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____5. A different, but equally, acceptable, form of English.

____6. An uneducated way of speaking that is difficult to understand, poorly developed, and incapable of expressing complicated ideas.

PLEASE GO TO THE NEXT PAGE

Figure 2

-2-

Please answer the following questions based on your classroom experience with black dialect. Please circle the letter of the ONE answer that, in general, most nearly describes your experience.

1. Dialect speakers in your classroom have difficulty following spoken directions.

   a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

2. You have difficulty understanding the speech of children with black dialect.

   a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

3. You think the Board of Education should provide special speech and language help for dialect-speaking children.

   a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

4. Dialect speakers, in general, seem as intelligent as non-dialect speakers.

   a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

5. You attempt to eliminate dialect from the speech of children in your class.

   a. always b. frequently c. sometimes d. never

6. Language subjects (such as spelling, composition, and reading) seem to be more difficult for dialect-speaking than for non-dialect speaking children.

   a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

7. Parents should eliminate black dialect from their speech.

   a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

8. Dialect-speaking children can make satisfactory progress in school without changing their speech.

   a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

9. Dialect use results in communication problems in your classroom.

   a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree

[1]Elizabeth Blodgett and Eugene Cooper, "Attitudes of Elementary Teachers Toward Dialect", Journal of Communication Disorders, Vol. 6(1973): 121-33.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

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